

us against the world by thenewromantics

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Summary:

two years without mike. one year alone. el faces the end of the world.

us against the world

Author's Note:

hello y'all!! i know, me posting two things back to back fics!! but this week is MILEVEN WEEK so expect some one shots this week. idk if i'll post something every day but i'm gonna try and write/post some. they're not gonna be super long but i hope you enjoy them regardless. i wrote this one in maybe three hours total? i was inspired earlier today and it all just kind of came flooding out of me. so i hope you enjoy!

prompt: long distance

Fall

By El's estimation, it had been about a year and a half since the end.

She had kept count when everything had first happened, tracked the days on a piece of paper in her pocket, counted them like Mike had all those years ago. But somewhere before Hopper's death and the long, harsh winter, she stopped. The piece of paper was lost and now El really had no idea how long it had been.

There had only been one winter, one devastatingly long, terrible winter. But now it was almost winter again, the familiar chill in the air itching her skin and sending chills down her spine.

It had been almost two years since she had seen any of her friends, almost a year since her dad died. Almost a year of being completely alone.

After Hop had gotten sick, the fever taking him away from her in the middle of the night on the cold floor of the cabin, El had fled. Left Hawkins behind, ran as far and as fast as she could. Every place that she had once loved, and found comfort in, was now abandoned and only reminded her of the people she had lost.

Actually no, lost wasn't the right word. The only person she had lost was Hop. Everyone else was just...gone. They were giant question marks in her mind. Their unknown fates something that would haunt El for the rest of her days.

Max, who had gone to California after graduation, who El had called on the phone three days before the power went off and never came back. Who had been so excited about her upcoming internship and visit from Lucas.

Dustin and Lucas, who were living together in Philadelphia. Both of them attending different schools but unable to completely get rid of each other. El could only hope that they still had each other, and that they were both still alive.

Will and his mom should have been here when it all started. Will was home visiting for the weekend before going to Indianapolis, but last minute him and his mom had decided to visit Jonathan, who had moved to New York years ago. It was with a heavy heart that El remembered the last time she had no idea where Will was, before he was even her friend and now he was practically her brother.

And then there was Mike. Mike who had gone to Boston for college, even though he had gotten into places in Indiana, where he wouldn't be as far away. Mike, who El had encouraged to go hundreds of miles away for school because she didn't want to hold him back. Mike, who she had been planning to surprise for Halloween.

Mike, who she had no idea was dead or alive. She preferred to think that he was alive, even if she didn't know where he was. Because at least if he was alive, that meant that he was okay. Thinking of him as hurt, or worse, *dead*, made El's heart squeeze uncomfortably in her chest.

It was Mike who was on her mind this particular night. The air was chilly, whipping around her, making it nearly impossible to build a fire. Not that El really wanted to do that, she didn't want to attract any unwanted attention, she could survive without one, at least for now.

She was shivering, desperately wrapping Hop's police jacket (the only

jacket she had been able to bring with her) around her frame. She was getting smaller, too many hours on foot and not enough food in her stomach, but her stomach wasn't rumbling, which was a good sign. The sky was darkening quickly and El knew it was only a little while longer before the earth was blacked completely.

Reaching towards her bag, she felt her fingers brush against the cool metal of the weapon buried deep amongst her things. She swallowed roughly. Despite the full use of her abilities, Hop had still taught her how to shoot, wanting to make sure she could protect herself no matter what. She had hardly used it since he passed, but she knew he would be proud of her for still having it with her. Just in case.

After a couple seconds of groping, her flashlight a couple inches away atop the leaves, El felt herself smile as she found what she was looking for. Pulling it out gently, she watched as the chain sparkled in the light moonlight, the flat heart pendant pressed firmly against her palm. Flipping the necklace over carefully, tears flooded in her eyes as she read the inscription on the back.

El,

No amount of distance could stop me from loving you.

Promise,

Mike

The necklace had been an eighteenth birthday present from Mike, gifted to her right before he left for his freshman school year. She wore it every single day, even after the end came. Eventually she stopped wearing it, instead carrying it around, not wanting it to fall from neck. Something inside of her was itching, gnawing at her to slip it around her neck.

Before she could make a decision one way or the other, however, a twig snapping rang through the still silence. Freezing in place, El gripped the necklace tightly in her hand, feeling the heart pendant roughly against her skin. Her heart was beating erratically in her chest and she swore she couldn't breathe.

Listening carefully, El tried to discern if the noise she heard were footsteps of the human (dead or undead) or animal, and after a couple seconds, the shuffling of heavy footfalls became evident and El's heart jumped into her throat. Using the tracking skills that Hop had taught her as a mere teenager, she determined that the footsteps were close, probably only a couple hundred feet away.

That gave her absolutely no time to try and get up and run away, she had already made camp here for the night and her stuff was a little more scattered around then it usually would be. So instead, she moved quickly, dropping the necklace in the front pocket of her backpack, sighing in relief when she heard it drop alongside the hair tie Hop had entrusted in her years previous, before grabbing the still unfamiliar weapon from the larger pocket.

Despite knowing how to use it, El had only had to use the gun once, on a undead that was cornering her. She hated the noise that it made and she hadn't slept for days after it, the bang of the release of the bullet and the feel of the gun jerk in her hand haunting her. But, she would do it again if necessary. She had no idea what was beyond the trees, coming closer and closer every step.

And when she finally did know, the gun fell from her hands, dropping to the ground with thud.

Because as the figure emerged through the branches, El thought she was dreaming. Standing tall, but much slimmer and roughed up then she had ever seen him before (which was saying something), was Mike.

"El?" His voice was like honey on a warm day, so much so that El was sure this meant that she was dreaming. Or that she was dying and this was the last thing she would see before she left this world for good. "Oh my god. I've been looking for you everywhere."

With that, El crumpled. Tears, hot and relieved, spilled from her eyes and started streaming down her cheeks. Her hands were shaking and with uneven steps she pushed herself forward, throwing herself against him. His arms wrap around her immediately, pulling her tightly against his body.

For a moment, they stand there, not saying anything. Their breathes are similarly uneven and ragged, chests harsh and heavy against each other. El could feel Mike's hot tears against the skin of her neck and she was sure her own tears were dropping on his t shirt.

"I can't believe you're here." Mike whispered, his face still pressed into her skin. The feeling of his lips, cold, but very much alive and real, against her neck sent a tingle down her spin. She couldn't believe it either, that he was here, and he was real and he had found her.

It reminded her of that fateful day back in 1984.

"I can't believe you found me." El finally says, speaking for the first time since she saw him. Her voice comes out rough and quiet, but she knows Mike can hear her, based on how his arms squeeze tighter, which she didn't know was possible, around her middle. "I had no idea what happened to you." She whispers.

Mike's cheek nuzzles against hers, a response to her words. El can tell that he feels the same way, that for the past year and a half (or so, El still didn't know), they had been suffering with the not knowing. The not knowing if the other one was okay, or where they were, if they were alive that is.

And now she had Mike's arms wrapped around her and for the first time since her dad died, she felt safe. She felt loved. She felt *not alone*.

"As soon as everything happened, I wanted to come and find you. I had no idea what was going on, or even if I was gonna be alive the next day. I just knew that I needed to find you and know that you were okay." Mike said, finally pulling away from her, even if it was only a little. His hands were still firm on her waist and his forehead moved to press against hers, his breath warm on her face.

El felt guilty suddenly, hot pools of guilt and regret filling her stomach and running up her body like bile. She hates that she never tried to contact him in the void, at least to tell him that she was okay. Her powers had weakened with her body, but it would have been worth it to try.

"I'm sorry." She said softly, swallowing down a sob. "I'm sorry that I never told you that I was okay." Mike shook his head, his forehead pressing ever firmer against hers.

"No, El. Don't apologize." Mike whispered. "Besides, you wouldn't have known where I was, so who's to say that you would have even found me."

Giving him a watery smile, El takes a deep breathe. Her heart is still beating quickly against her rib cage and she swears this all feels like a dream. But she knows that it isn't. That this is real and Mike is *alive*.

"We're together now that's all that matters." Mike says softly, his lips pressing a soft kiss against her forehead. "And we're never going to be apart, ever again." He says, voice still soft, but firm. El recognizes his tone, it's the one he uses when he's making a promise. A promise that he never, ever, plans on breaking.

"You promise?" She still asks, wanting, no *needing*, that reassurance. The last two years have hardened her in a way that she never expected, and right now she just needs to hear the words out of his mouth. She's lost too much, been alone for too long.

"I promise, more than I've ever promised anything." He says, giving her a small grin. El smiles back, wrapping her arms around his neck again, needing to hold him in her arms once more.

As she holds Mike against her, she pressed her lips to the skin of his neck, one, two, three, four times. Each kiss represents something she wants to say, *I love you. I missed you. Never leave me. I can't lose you again.* Mike knows her well enough at this point to know what they mean. El had never been great with words, even as she grew older and expanded her vocabulary and especially with Mike, she always preferred to let her actions do the talking.

"I love you, too." He whispers, his own lips pressing firmly against the spot where her neck meets her collar. "I promise that I'm not going anywhere, we're in this together." Mike says, he always has had such a way with words.

El responds by pulling away from him, her eyes immediately finding his. It's been so long since she's been able to look at him, and he's even more beautiful than she remembered. He seems to sense what she wants, and read the look in her eyes, and his hands go to cup her cheeks, bringing their lips together. On her tiptoes (she had forgotten just how *tall* he was) she kisses him, letting the horror and the desolation of the world fade around her. Enjoying the way that Mike's lips feel against hers, soft, warm and familiar.

When he pulls away, he brings her into his chest, his chin atop her head. El sighs, feeling content and peaceful for the first time in what feels like a lifetime. She knows that eventually they'll have to face the terrors of the world, make a game plan on what to do next. They'll talk about what's happened to them, she'll tell him about Hop and he'll tell her how he got back to Indiana (or wherever they are), and they'll cry and face even more hardships than they already have.

But they'll be together, so El knows that they'll be okay.

Author's Note:

the prompt for day one of mileven week: long distance
my brain: apocalypse au?

so maybe i went off prompt a little bit bUT i hope it was an enjoyable read regardless! please let me know what you think! :) thank you so much for reading!